

CLAIMS

1 1. A system for conducting and facilitating transactions in a commodity goods
2 marketplace or industry, comprising:

3 an auction site for conducting and facilitating transactions in a selected industry, the
4 auction site connected to a global computer network and accessible via a standard Web
5 browser, wherein the auction site enables private auctions;

6 a pre-qualifier for pre-qualifying users, wherein after successful pre-qualification, a
7 user is granted access to a private auction on the auction site;

8 a message notifying delivery component for automatically sending electronic
9 messages to users, the electronic messages notifying the users of information specific to an
10 auction, wherein time of day information is presented in a user's local time zone;

11 an auction representative interface for:

12 (1) posting an auction to the auction site by an authorized auction
13 representative,

14 (2) creating users,

15 (3) managing users, and

16 (4) initiating invitations to users to join a scheduled auction; and

17 a user interface for:

18 (1) selecting an auction on the auction site, where a list of auctions from
19 which a user selects an auction comprises auctions to which the user has been invited,

20 (2) bidding for an item in a selected auction, wherein a bid is valid if it
21 meets a pre-determined criteria, the predetermined criteria comprising a determination of
22 whether (a) the bid is made within a selected time interval, (b) a numerical difference

between the bid and a current winning bid is greater than a selected threshold, and (c) the bidding user is authorized, and wherein only valid bids are accepted by the auction site;

(3) viewing previous bids in a selected auction, where for a viewed bid, information used to identify the user who placed the viewed bid remains hidden to other users, but is open to authorized auction representative personnel, and

(4) enabling a first user to “auto bid” during an auction, where an auto bid allows the first user to specify a maximum bid above a current bid, and increases the first user’s bid by a pre-specified minimum bid up to the specified maximum bid when a second user outbids the first user,

wherein, if presented in the user interface, time of day information is presented in a user’s local time zone.

2. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein the message notifying delivery component automatically sends an invitation to a user who has been selected as a bidder for an auction when the auction is created, wherein the user is pre-qualified and created as a user in the auction site prior to being selected as a bidder.

3. A system as recited in claim 2, wherein the message notifying delivery component automatically sends a reminder to selected bidders for an auction at a pre-determined time prior to the auction open time.

4. A system as recited in claim 2, wherein the message notifying delivery component automatically sends a notice to a first bidder when the first bidder is outbid by a second bidder.

1 5. A system as recited in claim 2, wherein the message notifying delivery
2 component automatically sends a message to winning bidders, notifying the winning bidders
3 of the winning bids.

1 6. A system as recited in claim 2, wherein the message notifying delivery
2 component automatically sends a message to losing bidders, notifying the losing bidders of
3 the losing bids.

1 7. A system as recited in claim 2, wherein an auction representative posts the
2 auction via the auction representative interface and the message notifying delivery
3 component automatically sends a message to the posting auction representative identifying
4 winning bidders.

1 8. A system as recited in claim 2, wherein an auction is created with a review
2 feature, the review feature causing a review delay requiring interaction and review by an
3 auction representative before the message notifying delivery component automatically sends
4 a message to bidders with a status notification indicating whether a bidder has won or lost a
5 bid.

1 9. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein a user is presented with a selection of
2 auctions for which the user is authorized and unauthorized auctions are not viewable by the
3 user, and wherein the user is identified by a username and password to determine
4 authorization levels.

1 10. A system as recited in claim 1, where a plurality of auctions are created for the
2 auction site, the plurality of auctions being segregated into distinct groups, wherein a user has
3 access to all auctions in an authorized group.

1 11. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein a modifiable profile corresponds to
2 each user, the user being capable of modifying the corresponding profile via the user
3 interface.

1 12. A system as recited in claim 11, wherein the modifiable user profile identifies
2 a default time zone for the corresponding user.

1 13. A system as recited in claim 11, wherein a set of desired electronic messages
2 is selected by a user via the modifiable user profile.

1 14. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein a history of winning and losing bids
2 by a user is viewable to the bidding user via the user interface.

1 15. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein the user interface allows a user to
2 search the auction site for a selected auction.

1 16. A system as recited in claim 15, wherein search criteria for the auction search
2 comprises at least one item selected from the group consisting of: auction name, item name,
3 open time, close time, auction id, item id, and auction quantity.

1 17. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein bids identical in price are ranked first
2 based on quantity and then on time.

1 18. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein the user interface presents a list of bids
2 for an auction at a user selectable refresh rate.

1 19. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein a user with a winning bid selects a
2 location from which to ship the auctioned item.

1 20. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein an auction is created with a start time
2 and an end time, the end time being automatically extended by a pre-determined amount of
3 time when a user places a valid bid within a pre-determined amount of time immediately
4 prior to the scheduled end time.

1 21. A method for enabling transactions in a commodity goods marketplace or
2 industry, comprising:
3 posting, by an authorized user (auction representative), an auction to an auction site
4 for conducting and facilitating transactions in a selected industry, the auction site connected
5 to a global computer network and accessible via a standard Web browser, wherein the auction
6 site enables private auctions, and wherein posting further comprises scheduling the auction;
7 creating users, by an auction representative, on the auction site, each user being a
8 member of at least one group, wherein each group has access to at least one selected auction,
9 and wherein a user has access to auctions associated with a user's group, but does not have
10 access to auctions not associated with the user's group, and wherein users are for pre-
11 qualified before being granted access to a private auction on the auction site;;

12 managing users, by an auction representative, for adding, modifying and deleting
 13 users from the auction site and selected auctions;
 14 initiating invitations to users to join a scheduled auction; and
 15 automatically notifying users of auction events by sending electronic messages to the
 16 appropriate users, wherein time of day information in the message is presented in a user's
 17 local time zone.

1 22. A method for conducting and facilitating transactions in a commodity goods
 2 marketplace or industry, comprising:

3 posting, by an authorized user (auction representative), an auction to an auction site
 4 for conducting and facilitating transactions in a selected industry, the auction site connected
 5 to a global computer network and accessible via a standard Web browser, wherein the auction
 6 site enables private auctions, and wherein posting further comprises scheduling the auction;
 7 creating users, by an auction representative, on the auction site, each user being a
 8 member of at least one group, wherein each group has access to at least one selected auction,
 9 and wherein a user has access to auctions associated with a user's group, but does not have
 10 access to auctions not associated with the user's group, and wherein users are for pre-
 11 qualified before being granted access to a private auction on the auction site;;

12 managing users, by an auction representative, for adding, modifying and deleting
 13 users from the auction site and selected auctions;
 14 initiating invitations to users to join a scheduled auction;
 15 automatically notifying users of auction events by sending electronic messages to the
 16 appropriate users, wherein time of day information in the message is presented in a user's
 17 local time zone;

18 selecting an auction on the auction site, by a bidding user (bidder) where a list of
19 auctions from which the bidder selects an auction comprises auctions to which the bidder has
20 been invited and granted access;

21 bidding for an item in a selected auction, by a bidder, wherein a bid is valid if it meets
22 a pre-determined criteria, the predetermined criteria comprising a determination of whether
23 (a) the bid is made within a selected time interval, (b) a numerical difference between the bid
24 and a current winning bid is greater than a selected threshold, and (c) the bidding user is
25 authorized, and wherein only valid bids are accepted by the auction site;

26 viewing previous bids in a selected auction, where for a viewed bid, information used
27 to identity a bidder who placed the viewed bid remains hidden to other bidders, but is open to
28 authorized auction representatives; and

29 enabling a first bidder to “auto bid” during an auction, where an auto bid allows the
30 first bidder to specify a maximum bid above a current bid, and increases the first bidder’s bid
31 by a pre-specified minimum bid up to the specified maximum bid when a second bidder
32 outbids the first bidder,

33 wherein, if presented to a bidder, time of day information is presented in the bidder’s
34 local time zone.

1 23. A system as recited in claim 22, wherein automatically notifying users sends
2 an invitation to a user who has been selected as a bidder for an auction when the auction is
3 created, wherein the user is pre-qualified and created as a user in the auction site prior to
4 being selected as a bidder.

1 24. A system as recited in claim 23, wherein automatically notifying users sends a
2 reminder to selected bidders for an auction at a pre-determined time prior to the auction open
3 time.

1 25. A system as recited in claim 23, wherein automatically notifying users sends a
2 notice to a first bidder when the first bidder is outbid by a second bidder.

1 26. A system as recited in claim 23, wherein automatically notifying users sends a
2 message to winning bidders, notifying the winning bidders of the winning bids.

1 27. A system as recited in claim 23, wherein automatically notifying users sends a
2 message to losing bidders, notifying the losing bidders of the losing bids.

1 28. A system as recited in claim 22, wherein posting an auction is performed using
2 an auction representative interface and once posted, the auction representative interface
3 creating an event which triggers an automatic message for automatically notifying the posting
4 auction representative of winning bidders of the posted auction.

1 29. A system as recited in claim 22, further comprising reviewing results of an
2 auction, by an auction representative, wherein if reviewing is enabled, automatically
3 notifying users of auction events is delayed until the reviewing is complete.

1 30. A system as recited in claim 22, wherein a bidder is presented with a selection
2 of auctions for which the bidder is authorized and unauthorized auctions are not viewable by

the bidder, and wherein the bidder is identified by a username and password to determine authorization levels.

31. A system as recited in claim 22, wherein posting an auction is repeated for a plurality of auctions, each of the plurality of auctions being segregated into distinct groups, wherein a user has access to all auctions in an authorized group.

32. A system as recited in claim 22, wherein creating a user further comprises: generating a modifiable profile corresponding to the user, the profile initially containing default information relating to the user, the user being capable of modifying the user's corresponding profile via a user interface.

33. A system as recited in claim 32, wherein the modifiable user profile identifies a default time zone for the corresponding user.

34. A system as recited in claim 32, wherein a set of desired electronic messages is selected by a user via the modifiable user profile.

35. A system as recited in claim 22, further comprising viewing a history of winning and losing bids, by a user, via a user interface.

36. A system as recited in claim 22, further comprising searching for a selected auction in the auction site via a user interface.

1 37. A system as recited in claim 36, wherein search criteria for the searching
2 comprises at least one item selected from the group consisting of: auction name, item name,
3 open time, close time, auction id, item id, and auction quantity.

1 38. A system as recited in claim 22, further comprising ranking bids placed by
2 bidders, wherein bids identical in price are ranked first based on quantity and then on time.

1 39. A system as recited in claim 22, further comprising selecting a refresh rate for
2 bidding screens, by a user, wherein a bidding screen presents a list of current and previous
3 bids in an auction.

1 40. A system as recited in claim 22, further comprising selecting, by a winning
2 bidder, a location from which to ship the auctioned item.

1 41. A system as recited in claim 22, further comprising automatically extending a
2 pre-determined scheduled end time for an auction, by a pre-determined amount of time, when
3 a bidder places a valid bid within a pre-determined amount of time immediately prior to the
4 scheduled end time.